

## Animal Safety Plan

The best way to protect your family from the effects of a disaster is to have a disaster plan. If you are a pet owner, that plan must include your pets. Being prepared can save their lives.

If you must evacuate, make sure you find a safe shelter for your pets. If it's not safe for you, it's not safe for them. Pets left behind can become injured, lost or ill. So, prepare now for the day when you and your pets may have to leave your home.

**Don't forget your pet when preparing a family disaster plan. Assemble a portable pet disaster supplies kit.**

Keep items in an accessible place and store them in sturdy containers that can be easily carried. Your pet disaster supplies kit should include:

- Medications, immunization records and a first aid kit.
- Sturdy leashes, muzzles, harnesses, carriers or cages to transport pets safely. Carriers should be large enough for the pet to stand comfortably, turn around and lie down. Include blankets or towels for bedding and warmth.
- Current photos of your pets in case they get lost.
- Food, drinking water, bowls, cat litter/pan and can opener.
- Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems and the name and number of your veterinarian.
- Pet beds and toys, if easily transportable.

### Have a Safe Place To Take Your Pets

Many public disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of health and safety regulations and other considerations. The only animals allowed in some shelters are service animals that assist people with disabilities. Research your sheltering options before a disaster strikes. Work with your local emergency management and humane organizations to develop sheltering alternatives for people with pets.

- Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets.
- Ask friends, relatives or others outside your area whether they could shelter your animals in an emergency.
- Prepare a list of animal shelters, boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency.

### Know What To Do As a Disaster Approaches

- Call ahead to confirm emergency shelter arrangements for you and your pets.
- Check to be sure your pet disaster supplies are ready to take at a moment's notice.
- Bring all pets into the house so you won't have to search for them if you have to leave in a hurry.
- Make sure all dogs and cats are wearing collars and up-to-date identification tags.

## **If You Shelter in Place ("Stay Put")**

- Identify a safe area of your home where you can all stay together, including your pets.
- Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers. Be sure they are wearing identification tags.
- Have medications and a supply of pet food and water inside watertight containers.

## **In Case You're Not Home**

Make arrangements in advance for a trusted neighbor to take your pets and meet you at a predetermined location. Make sure that the person is comfortable around your pets, knows where they are likely to be, knows where your disaster supplies are kept and has a key to your home.

If you use a pet-sitting service, it may be able to help, but discuss this possibility well in advance.

## **After a Disaster**

Walk pets on a leash until they become re-oriented to their home - often familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and pets could easily be confused and become lost. Also, downed power lines, reptiles brought in with high water and debris can all pose a threat for animals after a disaster.

If pets cannot be found after a disaster, contact the local animal control office to find out where lost animals can be reclaimed. Bring along a picture of your pet if possible.

Get your pets back into their normal routines as soon as possible. After a disaster, animals can become aggressive or defensive - monitor their behavior. If these problems persist or if your pet seems to be having any health problems, talk to your veterinarian.

## **Additional Resources:**

All links open in a new browser window.

- [Humane Society of the United States: Disaster Center](http://www.hsus.org/ace/18730)  
<http://www.hsus.org/ace/18730>
- [Find pet-friendly lodging in your area](http://www.petswelcome.com)  
<http://www.petswelcome.com>
- [Saving The Whole Family - The American Veterinary Medical Association](http://www.avma.org/disaster/savingfamily.asp)  
Lots of links to disaster preparedness sites for pets and animals  
<http://www.avma.org/disaster/savingfamily.asp>
- [FEMA: Animals and Emergencies](http://www.fema.gov/fema/anemer.shtm)  
<http://www.fema.gov/fema/anemer.shtm>
- [Pets and Disaster: Be Prepared](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/animalsafety.html)  
from the American Red Cross  
<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/animalsafety.html>
- [Disaster Preparedness for Animals](http://www.vfhs.org/resource/disaster.htm)  
from the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies  
<http://www.vfhs.org/resource/disaster.htm>